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WILDLIFE SERVICES—KANSAS

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Kansas

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on Kansas Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS works to protect property and reduce human health and safety. The program also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guards many natural resources, such as fisheries and timber, from wildlife depredation; and

educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by Kansas WS include protecting human health and safety at airports, protecting property and utilities, managing blackbird and starling damage at livestock facilities, assisting the Kansas Animal Health Department (KAHD) with feral swine management and assisting the military in mitigating a variety of wildlife problems caused by skunks, coyotes, beavers, pigeons, starlings, and other wildlife.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

Kansas WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. In some cases, WS will also provide on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Agricultural Resources—Probably best known as a wheat-producing state, Kansas also produces a wide variety of agricultural products. Kansas grows a variety of grains including grain sorghum, corn, soy beans, sunflower and, of course, wheat. Livestock production is predominantly beef cattle, but the state is also home to dairies, hog farms and a variety of hobby farms. With such diverse agricultural resources, WS constantly faces challenging and new wildlife conflicts.

Aquaculture Assistance—Kansas WS' biologist assists aquaculture by providing



technical assistance for resolving migratory bird damage. Technical assistance often involves species identification and suggestions for control strategies as well as equipment loan. WS also provides assistance to State and private aquaculture facilities in obtaining depredation permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services when such permits are warranted.

Protecting Livestock from Bird

Damage—Blackbirds, such as red-winged blackbirds, brown-headed cowbirds, Brewer's blackbirds, common grackles, great-tailed grackles, and European starlings, cause significant economic losses to some livestock producers by consuming and contaminating livestock feed and acting as a vector for livestock diseases. Flocks of hundreds of thousands or more of these birds feed at Kansas feedlots each day from mid-November through mid-March. The facility managers have estimated that blackbirds and starlings can consume and contaminate thousands of dollars worth of livestock feed daily at each facility. WS addresses the problem using integrated pest management, or multiple strategies based on each situation's particular circumstances and applicable science.

WS recommends and uses a wide array of techniques to mitigate the problems asso-

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting livestock facilities from starling and blackbird damage
- Protecting property and public utilities from pigeons, starlings and blackbird damage
- Managing damage at airports from wildlife strikes
- Managing damage caused by wildlife and protecting property from damage on military lands
- Providing technical assistance to Kansas residents about a variety of wildlife conflicts

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Kansas:

- Evaluating effective management of blackbirds at livestock facilities and for grain sorghum and sunflower producers
- Identifying starlings and blackbirds as disease reservoirs and vectors at livestock facilities
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Feral swine populations, range and travel habits
- Monitoring wildlife diseases such as rabies in skunks and bats and monitoring disease in feral hogs

ciated with large blackbird flocks. Producers are encouraged to use noise-making devices to attempt scaring the birds out of their facilities, to schedule livestock feedings at times when fewer birds are present, and to modify feed bunks and other equipment to minimize the availability of livestock feed to birds. WS also uses selective and environmentally safe methods to reduce the local bird populations to tolerable levels. In addition, National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), WS's research institute, is working to develop more effective and efficient blackbird and starling management methods, which will alleviate damage while remaining biologically sound and publicly acceptable. The Department of Biological Sciences, North Dakota State University, Fargo, in cooperation with the WS and NWRC, is currently conducting research to study European starling movements among feedlots in Kansas.

Protecting Livestock from Feral Hog

Threats—In 2006 Kansas WS signed a Cooperative Agreement with the Kansas Animal Health Department to cooperatively manage Kansas feral hog populations. Feral swine, which are becoming established in several areas of Kansas, pose a potential disease threat to the domestic swine industry. Additionally, feral swine damage crops and fences and can pass diseases to other livestock, such as cattle. WS provides expertise in locating, trapping and the use of aerial hunting to remove feral swine. They can inflict considerable damage to property and crops, as well as threaten native wildlife through competition for food and habitat destruction.

Protecting Health and Safety—Kansas, home to almost 2.7 million people, enjoys a diverse ecological mix of urban and suburban settings and agricultural, forested,

and grassland environments. Accordingly, WS biologists work to reduce risk to public health and safety and property damage associated with wildlife damage.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—Every year, lives are endangered worldwide and billions of dollars are wasted when birds and other animals damage aircraft. Experts estimate wildlife strikes with airplanes cost the U.S. civil aviation industry more than \$550 million annually. Kansas has one of the country's busiest air-transportation centers. Known as the Air Capitol of the Midwest, Wichita is home to McConnell Air Force Base, Wichita Mid-Continent Airport, Colonel James Jabara Airport, several private aircraft manufacturers (Raytheon, Boeing, Cessna, and Lear-Jet), and numerous private airports.

WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' NWRC conducts research to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation and reduce risks to the public. Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species of greatest concern to the aviation industry.

Applying this scientific expertise, Kansas WS provides assistance to several civilian and military airports annually. WS officials conduct on-site evaluations and comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments before direct management work is done.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to address blackbird and starling damage at livestock feedlots, dairies, and in sunflower and grain sorghum fields throughout the State. A cooperative research study will increase knowledge of these birds' activities and increase WS' ability to address bird damage. The ability to respond in a timely and effective manner is also contingent upon cooperation from other State and Federal agencies, appropriate habitat management practices, and research.

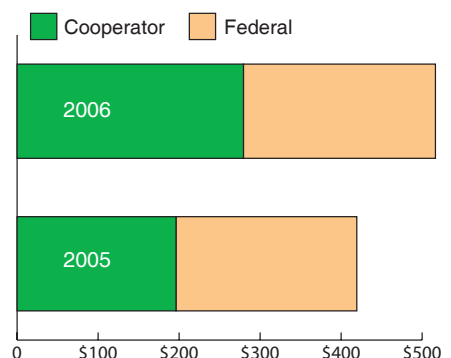
WS' work with feral swine will continue to gain importance as populations continue to expand. Crop and pasture damage as well as the disease threats to agriculture will begin to gain importance. Additional funding is necessary to adequately address problems caused by feral swine.

In 2006 Kansas WS participated with a national avian influenza early detection effort. WS and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks collected more than 2,550 bird and fecal samples. These efforts help safeguard American agriculture and human health and safety. It is likely some avian influenza early detection projects will continue in future years depending on funding.

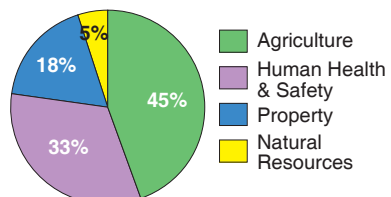
Kansas Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from the State of Kansas and cooperators who have a vested interest in the program: producers, private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, State, and local government agencies. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or play a role in wildlife management.

Total Funding (Thousands)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA is an equal employment provider and employer.

Major Cooperators:

- Kansas Animal Health Department
- U.S. Army - Conservation Division, Fort Riley Military Reservation
- Wichita Mid-Continent and Colonel James Jabara Airports
- Kansas City Power and Light
- Kansas City Board of Public Utilities